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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000104

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV SR KV

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: ITALIANS MAY NOT SEEK TO DELAY COORDINATED DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

REF: A) ROME 94 B) ROME 71

Classified By: Jonathan R. Cohen, Acting Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The GOI is backing away from a Spanish-inspired push to postpone Kosovo's declaration of independence from February to Mid-March, after the Spanish elections. On January 15, FM D'Alema told the Ambassador that the GOI preferred a go-slow approach to avoid interfering in the Spanish elections and to give the EU more time to bring the largest number of countries into the first wave of those who would recognize immediately (Ref B). PM Prodi's senior diplomatic advisor Stefano Sannino reiterated that point to the Ambassador the following day.

¶2. (C) However, on January 24, Raimondo De Cardona, Head of the MFA Balkans Office, told poloff that although Italy would have preferred a March declaration, it had failed to convince other European members of the Quint to support a delay (a British Poloff confirmed the GOI had made a case for postponement to the UK). Additionally, current Italian government instability meant that FM D'Alema could not argue forcefully in favor of postponement, since there was a possibility that he would not be around to implement that policy.

¶3. (C) De Cardona noted that one positive outcome of Italy's current domestic political situation would be that parliamentary opposition to Italian recognition of Kosovo's independence would likely be muted, as political parties would be focused almost exclusively on the government crisis.

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